

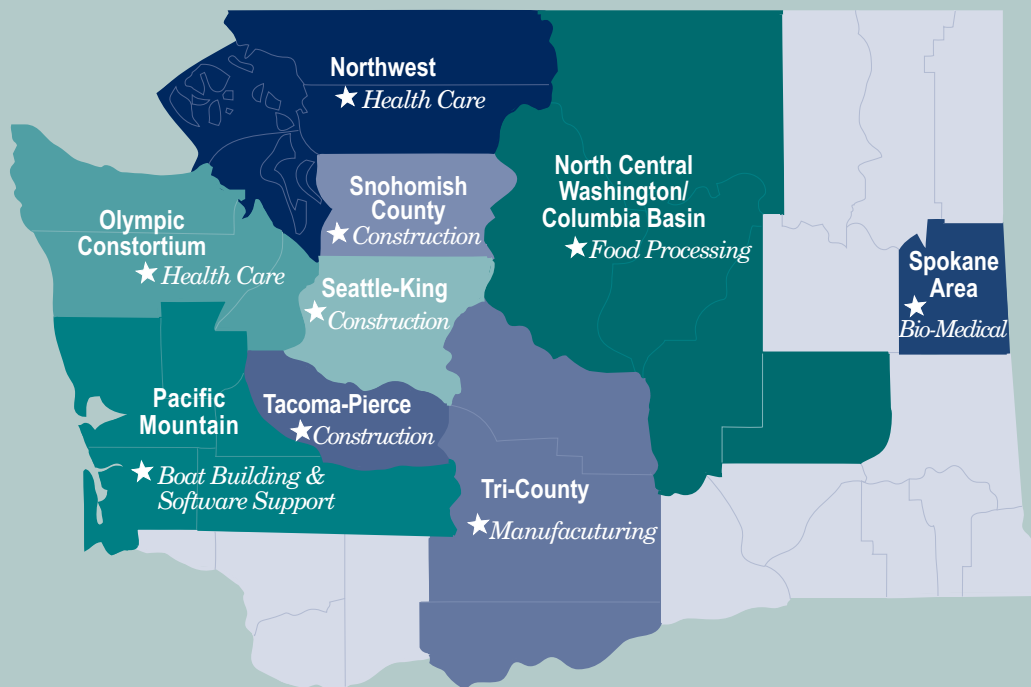
# SECURING KEY INDUSTRY LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING SKILLS

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## Washington State's SKILLS Projects

*An industry / education partnership to close  
the skills gap facing Washington businesses.*

### Report to the Legislature 2001



WASHINGTON STATE WORKFORCE TRAINING AND EDUCATION COORDINATING BOARD

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# SKILLS

## *Securing Key Industry Leadership for Learning Skills*

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### **SKILLS Projects Respond to Skilled Worker Shortage**

*During the last two decades, Washington has seen dramatic growth in knowledge-based industries such as information technology and health care, and declines in resource-based industries such as agriculture, fishing, and forestry. Nearly all industries must invest in new technologies to stay competitive. Workers are expected to keep their skills up to pace with technological changes since a skilled workforce is critical to Washington's economy. In recent state and national surveys, employers say that they continue to face shortages of skilled workers, despite the 2001-2002 recession. Even more troubling, business owners say that limited access to a skilled workforce is by far the largest barrier to expansion over the next five years. As the economy begins to recover, workers must be prepared to function in new and recovering industries, ensuring a productive, secure, and prosperous future for all Washington residents. Business, labor, and education have crucial roles in assuring that our workers have the skills necessary to keep Washington State competitive. Their active participation in SKILLS panels will assure that education and training programs give students skills needed to ensure Washington's employers competitive edge.*



Created by the 2000 Legislature, the SKILLS initiative supported grants to local workforce development councils (WDCs) to engage business and industry in strategies to close the skill gaps in Washington State.

SKILLS projects create partnerships among WDCs, business, labor, and education to:

- ★ Determine an industry's future skill and training needs.
- ★ Enlist education to revise and/or develop training programs.
- ★ Expand the use of skill standards to meet employer needs.
- ★ Support on-the-job learning strategies.

In the initiative's first year, seven SKILLS projects were funded with state funds. Projects formed one or more panels made up of business and labor representatives from a specific industry and the educators serving that industry. In 2001, due largely to the success of the first year's projects, a second round of projects was funded with federal funds. They began work in early 2002; a third round will begin in mid-2002.

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WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT COUNCILS							
	NORTH- WEST	OLYMPIC	KING, PIERCE & SNOHOMISH	SPOKANE	PACIFIC MOUNTAIN	NORTH CENTRAL	TRI- COUNTY
INDUSTRY	Health Care	Health Care	Construction	Bio- Medical	Software Support/ Boat Bldg.	Food Processing	Manu- facturing
FUNDING	\$26,000	\$47,875	\$150,000	\$188,150	\$57,000	\$65,325	\$65,650
Created skill panel	★	★	★	★	★	★	★
Analyzed/validated regional labor market data	★	★		★			★
Identified skill/occupation gaps	★	★		★	★		★
Compiled existing skill standards			★				
Developed skill standards				★			
Developed job ladders/wage progression	★						
Developed plan to address barriers	★	★	★		★		★
Recommended/revised curricula				★	★	★	★
Developed training program/ curricula	★		★	★		★	★
Catalyzed new or expanded training	★			★			★
Developed web-based training							★
Developed marketing and recruitment tools	★		★	★		★	
Expanded apprenticeship/prep				★			
Created/conducted pre- post-assessment					★	★	★
Integrated with existing partnership		★		★	★		★
Received joint IFST training funds	\$127,995	\$175,000					\$174,476
Received joint rural/ communitydevelopment funds	\$79,000						\$78,500
Received additional funding <sup>1</sup>	★	★	★	★		★	★
<sup>1</sup> Several SKILLS projects resulted in additional funding or merged with other key public/private partnerships. Some workforce development councils integrated the SKILLS panels into their strategic plans and continue to support them in a variety of ways. SKILLS panels often served as catalysts for other initiatives.							

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## 2001 SKILLS Performance

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Public/private partnerships are critical to the state's economic and workforce development success. SKILLS panels are often the first coalition of communities or industries to convene around a common interest—closing the skills gap. Public/private partnerships include community and/or industry stakeholders in local or regional areas.

In addition to the SKILLS panels, other skill gap industry initiatives were funded by Washington State and the federal Department of Labor. Those public/private partnerships included:

- Consortium for Retention and Advancement (CORA)—the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board received \$150,000 from the federal Department of Labor to conduct research on labor market trends in the hospitality industry and design wage progression strategies for entry-level workers.
- The Eastern Washington Agriculture and Food Processing Partnership—The Tri-County Workforce Development Council received \$750,000 from the federal Department of Labor and \$500,000 from Workforce Investment Act funds. These two programs were charged with developing an industry training system based on skill standards, creating an assessment model to measure skills gap, and providing critically needed immediate short-term customized training through a program known as “Skills Training for Incumbent Workers.” This partnership included two trade associations (Northwest Food Processing Association and Washington Grower’s League), four workforce development councils, five community colleges, two unions, and a community-based organization. The project had support from most of the state’s workforce system partners.
- The Seattle King County Workforce Development Council received \$3.5 million from the Department of Labor to collaborate with WSA (formerly known as Washington Software Alliance) and several postsecondary institutions to address the state’s acute need for skilled workers in information technology jobs. Guided by WSA, the project will create nine new certificate programs for computer-related fields by defining the skills and standards required by employers.

### Common Partners

*(including, but are not limited to)*

- Business and industry associations representing specific economic clusters.
- Labor—state, regional, and local representatives.
- Education—high schools, tech-prep programs, community colleges, and private vocational schools.
- Workforce development councils and their WorkSource centers.
- Community-based organizations.
- Economic development councils.
- Chambers of commerce and other business organizations.
- Tribes.
- Local elected officials.

Over 100 Washington State businesses participated in SKILLS projects, and many others through the above noted federal projects. Some of the industries represented were manufacturers, construction firms, boat builders, hotels, food processors, packing houses, biotechnology firms, hospitals, clinics, insurance companies, and long term care facilities. Several business and trade associations were also involved who, in turn, involved many of their member companies.

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## SKILLS Is Part of Joint Strategy to Target Workforce Development Efforts

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To target state resources strategically for workforce development, the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board, the Employment Security Department, and the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, joined together in the fall of 2001 to coordinate three requests for proposals (RFPs). These funding opportunities support Governor Locke's workforce development goal to close the gap between employers' need for skilled workers and the number of Washington residents prepared to meet that need. These agencies continued in their joint efforts by issuing four coordinated RFPs in March 2002. The RFPs reflect four stages of workforce development. The first stage is to bring together the leaders in a key economic sector to identify critical skill needs and solutions. The second is to use the partnership to implement industry skill standards. The third is to develop new training programs that prepare workers to meet the skill standards. The fourth stage is to provide the training.

<b>Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board</b> <i>Securing Key Industry Leadership for Learning Skills (SKILLS)</i>	Brings together leaders from business, labor, and workforce development providers in an economic sector.
<b>State Board for Community and Technical College</b> <i>Skill Standards Implementation Projects</i>	Implements skill standards.
<b>State Board for Community and Technical College</b> <i>High-Demand Projects</i>	Develops or revises curricula to meet occupational skill needs in high-demand fields.
<b>Employment Security Department</b> <i>Industries of the Future Skills Training Fund (IFST)</i>	Provides training to upgrade skills for incumbent workers.

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## Guiding Future Panels—Lessons Learned

In order to deepen the impact of industry skill panels throughout Washington State, project managers were asked to share their lessons learned. Their responses were remarkably similar and are condensed here.

### Choose Industry SKILL Panel Members Wisely

Spend the time to find the right people for productivity gains. Identify people who will contribute a significant amount of time to a project of this magnitude. The bulk of active participation comes from large organizations or industry associations that have the resources to expend. Some of the most effective panels had few people, but those few people possessed a wealth of information. However, remember to reassure those who cannot participate that they are not forgotten.

### Keep Employers Energized

When the skills gap problem is severe, it is relatively easy to capture initial employer attention. At first, employers can be enthusiastic, ready to volunteer their time, and supportive of community-based (shared) solutions. Keeping that attention and energy is the challenge. Sustaining attention involves clear, identifiable steps. Develop the work plan so there is visible and tangible progress early in the project.

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# WORKFORCE TRAINING AND EDUCATION COORDINATING BOARD

## The Vision

*The Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board is Washington State's valued and trusted source of leadership for the workforce training and education system.*

## Mission Statement

The Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board's mission is to bring business, labor, and the public sector together to shape strategies to best meet the state and local workforce and employer needs of Washington in order to create and sustain a high skill, high wage economy.

To fulfill this Mission, Board members, with the support of staff, work together to:

- Advise the Governor and Legislature on workforce development policy.
- Promote a system of workforce development that responds to the lifelong learning needs of the current and future workforce.
- Advocate for the non-baccalaureate training and education needs of workers and employers.
- Facilitate innovations in workforce development policy and practices.
- Ensure system quality and accountability by evaluating results and supporting high standards and continuous improvement.

## Board Members

René Ewing <i>Chair</i>			
Rick Bender <i>Representing Labor</i>	Geraldine Coleman <i>Representing Business</i>	Gay Kiesling <i>Representing Labor</i>	Sylvia Mundy <i>Commissioner, Washington State Employment Security Department</i>
Terry Bergeson <i>State Superintendent of Public Instruction</i>	Earl Hale <i>Executive Director, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges</i>	Tony Lee <i>Representing Targeted Populations</i>	Joseph J. Pinzone <i>Representing Business</i>
Don Brunell <i>Representing Business</i>		John McGinnis <i>Representing Labor</i>	

## Participating Officials

Vacant  
*Representing Local Elected Officials*

Dennis Braddock  
*Secretary, State Department of Social and Health Services*

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Ellen O'Brien Saunders  
*Executive Director*

*The Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board does not discriminate or deny services on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, religion, or disability.*

*This publication is available in alternative format upon request.*